Title

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Many 'non-professional' and 'non-certified' social workers seem to conduct indigenous social work practices in low- and middle-income countries in Asia. From the perspective of international developmental social work, this case study explores the education and training opportunities for local and indigenous social workers in disability related fields. The data was mainly obtained through field work and practice conducted by the author, whose positionality was considered an international social worker in Sri Lanka and Mongolia. The field data was supplemented by literature. The findings reveal that many local workers in government and non-government sectors, who might not have received professional social work education, engage in practices that can be considered a part of social work using their indigenous and local knowledge and skills. In some cases, these workers also use their knowledge of international concepts and frameworks. Additionally, this study presents some instances of knowledge exchange between domestic and international stakeholders through dialogue-based practices and training in the field. The findings suggest that international social workers are required to explore reflective practice and collaborative knowledge creation with domestic stakeholders, including indigenous social workers and disabled people, through dialogue in the field.

Keywords: capacity development; co-production; indigenous knowledge; social development perspective; reciprocal exchanges

Introduction

In developing countries in Asia, many practitioners seem to fulfil a portion of the roles of social workers, tackling various social issues on the front line, regardless of whether or not they have received a professional education. Their positionality and substantive activities may differ from the discourses and representations of professional social work in the Global North. This study discusses several themes relating to the education and training of those who are engaged in the field of social work even if untrained from the

perspective of international developmental social work (Desai, 2013). After touching upon some debates on professional social work and indigenous social work, this section will focus on the education and training of local social workers and indigenous social workers and describe the study's context within an international development perspective.

Practice and education of professional social work and indigenous social work

As Abraham Flexner posed them in the 1910s, the questions of 'who is a social worker?' and 'is social work a profession?' have remained a classic topic of debate (Flexner, 2001; Nikku, 2014). Nowadays, the most straightforward answer is provided in the Global Definition of the Social Work Profession (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2014). A significant feature of the definition of social work as a profession is that perspectives on social development, indigenous knowledges and contextuality, amongst other things, are incorporated (Ornellas et al., 2018). In terms of social work education, the Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession (IASSW & IFSW, 2014) is one of the dominant frameworks. Several researchers have discussed the establishment and application of global standards in the Asia-Pacific region (Noble, 2004). In other words, these norms and international stakeholders have influenced social work education and training across the globe.

Nevertheless, another reality must also be faced. In low- and middle-income countries in Asia, there is a complex issue of how to define practitioners who are not certified social workers—including those who live in a country where there is no certification system at the national level—but who substantially fulfil the functions of social work using their local knowledge, skills and social capital (Akimoto, 2017; Higashida, 2021). For instance, the term 'indigenous social work' has recently been

used in a certain context, particularly to describe 'culturally relevant social work for, with, and by Indigenous Peoples' (Gray et al., 2010: 8). However, the definition of indigenous peoples would depend on the people themselves and local communities as the historical contexts vary (Cunningham & Stanley, 2003). Considering the issues, this article uses the term 'local and indigenous social workers' in the broad sense for including non-certified local workers who use their indigenous and local knowledge and skills no matter whether or not they are 'indigenous peoples' in the narrow sense.[1]

Critical discussions are required regarding the social work education of local and indigenous human resources and the optimal relationship of this type of social work education with more formal social work education and the framework of international cooperation. Indeed, related international organisations state their commitment to 'ensuring countries that are new to social work have global peers to support the advancement of social work education free from colonial influences and creating platforms for indigenous social workers to shape curricula and relevant courses' (IFSW & IASSW, 2019). As Burke (2018) indicates, it is also significant that the support for local and indigenous social workers encompasses not only the educational institutions but also the field and training. Therefore, in each context, the educational and training opportunities for local and indigenous social workers, including their relationship with the international development perspective, should be discussed.

Case study contexts

Social work and its education can be classified traditionally into general and specific areas; amongst these, this study focussed on a specific social work education and

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[1] In some contexts, the term 'post-colonial social work' has also recently been used to decolonise social work in the Global South (Noyoo & Kleibl, 2019).

practice in the field of disability. This study selected this area not only because of my background in this field, but also because it tends to be marginalised relative to other developmental issues in Asia (Lamichhane, 2015), despite the fact that approximately 15% of the world's population are expected to be living with some form of disability (WHO & World Bank, 2011).

This study examines two cases, one from community practice in Sri Lanka and the other from macro-level practice in Mongolia. These cases have much in common in terms of practices in disability related fields, although the contexts of practice and education are different. In each study area, I practised with various stakeholders, including government officers and non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers, who fulfil a portion of social work functions locally.

In the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, I was dispatched as an international social worker by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to a rural area in the North-Central Province for two years starting in January 2013. I was assigned to the model area of the community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programme. My counterpart staff members at the field level were social services officers (SSOs). Major activities with local stakeholders included the implementation of community assessment, social resource development (e.g. the establishment and operational support of self-help groups and mobile workshops for disabled people and their families) and disability-inclusive activities with other sectors. I also carried out field surveys on disability issues with local government officers and local NGO staff in the Northern Province and the Western Province between 2016 and 2018. Indigenous peoples in Sri Lanka are Vedda (Wanniyalaeto) strictly speaking, but this study focuses solely on other ethnic groups, such as Sinhalese, Tamils and Moors.

In Mongolia, I was dispatched as a long-term expert with two other experts for the JICA's technical cooperative 'Project for Promoting Social Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Ulaanbaatar City' (DPUB) from May 2018 to May 2020. The job title was not that of a social worker specifically, but the substantive role was considered international social work. Although Mongolia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009 and enacted the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016, social issues and barriers continue to hinder the social participation of disabled people (Batdulam et al., 2019). The DPUB was jointly conducted to address disability issues by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Mongolia (MLSP) and JICA. The DPUB worked towards achieving the project goal, which was to ensure that 'the foundation for the promotion of social participation of disabled people is strengthened in Ulaanbaatar'.

Case study perspective and the aim of the study

Given that the field of social work has emerged from the need to address social issues and personal needs, not only theoretical and philosophical discussions but also an inductive approach with case studies would be appropriate for exploring alternative education and training based on the practices of local and indigenous social workers. The imposition of global definitions and standards without contextualisation, namely, a top-down approach, could introduce an imperialist tone into social work education, as Midgley (1981, 2009) indicates. In addition, developing the practice of and education for local and indigenous social work appropriately should be planned and implemented considering a unique context (Akimoto, 2017). Hence, the exploration of such education and training through case studies, with the critical discussion on international development and cooperation, is expected to contribute to the development of social work education and training that acknowledges local and indigenous practices.

This study aims to explore practical education and training for local and indigenous social workers in two countries, namely, Sri Lanka and Mongolia, from the perspective of international developmental social work.

Methods and Positionality

This section describes the methods and some other contexts of this study. It includes the explanation of the methods of case studies, data collection and analysis and the author's positionality.

The qualitative case study method was applied to data from the author's field notes and reports, obtained through active participant observation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Johnson et al., 2006). This method acknowledges that the analysis depends on the researchers' positionality, their interaction with stakeholders and their interpretation of the data.

The data was extracted from my field notes, interviews with local stakeholders and official and unofficial material that were all collected at the field level in Sri Lanka (from February 2013 to January 2015, from May 2016 to July 2016 and from December 2017 to January 2018) and Mongolia (from May 2018 to April 2020). The contents of the data included a description of the practice by and educational opportunities for local and indigenous social workers, information on formal education and my subjective and practical experiences in the field. The field data was supplemented by literature. By analysing data from my field notes as well as existing research and reports, I have attempted to identify phenomena that are significant in practical terms.

As is obvious from the above description of my activities, I had the positionality of an overseas social worker dispatched from Japan to each country. My activities were part of JICA's projects within the framework of Official Development Assistance. The contexts of my activities might involve political issues, including Japan's national

interests and international and domestic concerns (Okabe, 2014). At both sites, I collected and analysed data whilst focussing on conducting collaborative activities with local counterparts and disabled people to minimise such possible political influences. Nevertheless, some concerns regarding my positionality in this study, including potential influence on data collection and analysis, will be discussed in the Limitations section.

Findings

Cases in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is known for having a high human development index relative to other South Asian countries, but social work in this nation has both developing and challenging aspects (Rauff & Hatta, 2014; Subramaniam et al., 2014; Zaviršek & Herath, 2010). Several higher education institutions offer formal education and training courses in social work. The School of Social Work under the National Institute of Social Development (NISD) offers diplomas and bachelor's and master's degree courses in social work. Its predecessor, the Ceylon Institute of Social Work, dates back to 1952; it changed its name to the Sri Lanka School of Social Work in 1964, and has been recognised as a degree-awarding institution since 2005 (Zaviršek & Herath, 2010; NISD, 2017; Shamila, 2020). The University of Colombo, through cooperation with the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, commenced a social work stream in 2009 in response to the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami of 2004 (Herath, 2017; Lešnik & Urek, 2010; Zaviršek & Herath, 2010). Additionally, the University of Peradeniya offers education, including a master's degree course, in social work (University of Peradeniya, 2019). In terms of the perspective on social work within the local socio-cultural context (Samaraweera, 2020), some institutes (such as the NISD) and

researchers have recently explored indigenous innovations in the teaching of social work (Rauff & Hatta, 2014), a faith-based social work approach (Subramaniam et al., 2014) and Buddhist social work with practice-based research (Akimoto, 2020).

There appears to be a gap, however, between formal social work education and the supply of trained social workers (Herath, 2017; Lešnik & Urek, 2010; Samaraweera, 2020; Shamila, 2020; Zaviršek & Herath, 2010). During the interviews with NISD's faculty members in a field survey conducted in January 2018, one interviewee stated that the number of graduates who obtained government jobs related to social work, such as SSOs and development-related officers, was limited[2]. According to this interviewee, a specific educational background, such as a bachelor's degree in social work, was not required to be hired for these and related positions. Just recently, the Sri Lankan Cabinet approved the inclusion of a bachelor's degree in social work as a requirement for relevant posts, including SSOs (Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage, 2017; NISD, 2020a).

The president of the Sri Lanka Association of Professional Social Workers (hereafter, 'the Association'), founded in 1962, stated in an interview in 2018 that 'The concept of "social work" is not recognised correctly in Sri Lanka'. He said that social services and social work are regarded as similar matters, in that both are regarded as a kind of charity or benefits system; a similar issue was pointed out by Subramaniam et al. (2014) and Samaraweera (2020). The Association has issued certificates to 'professional

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[2] According to an NISD report, the employment percentage of graduates who obtained a Bachelor of Social Work from the NISD in 2012/2016 was 74%. Whilst 22% had found employment in the government sector, 54% had obtained a job with an NGO (Higashida, 2018; NISD, 2017).

social workers', but at the time of the interview, the number of applicants for this registration was not increasing significantly. In other words, the professional identity of social workers seemed to be weak. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the Association had attempted to promote its activities, including training and seminars. For example, the international seminar, titled 'Strengthening Families: Role of Social Workers', was held in cooperation with the Japanese Federation of Social Workers in January 2020 (IFSW, 2020).

Local and indigenous social workers in rural areas

In rural areas, several types of people functioned as social workers working in disability related fields. In this section, I will describe the examples, namely, local officers on the administrative side and NGO workers.

At the rural community level in the Anuradhapura district in the North-Central Province, SSOs and related officers in divisional secretariats performed some functions of social workers. They engaged with older people, single-parent households and other marginalised community members. In the national CBR programme, other positions in the government sector, such as development officers, were also involved, but SSOs took most of the initiative. Because the number of active NGOs pertaining to disability issues in my assigned area—with the exception of some NGOs such as AKASA (the Association of Women with Disabilities)—was limited, it was likely to be a government-led programme. Although some officers only engaged in administrative work, such as accepting applications for disability allowances, SSOs in my assigned area engaged in various social activities in cooperation with disabled people, their families and local community members. The SSOs not only provided casework but also conducted community-based activities. These were exemplified by regular meetings of village CBR committees consisting of disabled people and their families; support for the

operation of mobile workshops for disabled people; disability-inclusive events and awareness-raising activities made possible by mobilising local stakeholders (e.g. youth groups and temple congregations) and activities for the promotion of social participation of disabled people, such as monthly religious events. As represented by some local concepts, such as 'Shramadana', meaning the sharing of labour (Samaraweera, 2020), these SSOs were likely to emphasise collective and developmental activities using community mobilisation (Higashida, 2018).

In addition, village officers known as Grama Niladhari are in a position closest to the residents at the community level. I observed that the Grama Niladhari were likely to collect detailed information on the needs of residents, amongst other things, through strong inter-community relations. They were one of the major collaborators with SSOs and other related officers. Since the information and connections of the local people were important for their practices, SSOs and other related officers in many cases could not work without the help of the Grama Niladhari.

In one area, I observed a different situation. The Mullaitivu district in the Northern Province was profoundly affected by the 26-year civil war, and the post-war administration did not appear to be functioning sufficiently as of 2016. Instead, NGOs were actively playing its role with regard to working on disability issues. For example, VAROD, a local NGO, worked in CBR by strengthening the capacity development of local workers. VAROD's workers supported the establishment and operation of community-rehabilitation committees in each village and conducted livelihood support activities using a localised microcredit scheme (Higashida et al., 2017). In some other provinces and cities—particularly in Colombo, Sri Lanka's megacity—NGOs and disabled people's organisations (DPOs) carried out disability-inclusive development programmes. These NGOs offered training opportunities for frontline workers through

access to various resources, including donor support and expert guidance, depending on the organisation.

Education and training cases

Amongst the above-mentioned people, the number of local and indigenous social workers who had been trained for social work at higher education institutions was typically limited. The NISD's report indicates that there should be practising social workers who have been formally trained in the discipline; in fact, I met one social worker who held a degree in social work and also interviewed a Grama Niladhari who had obtained a higher diploma in social work through recurrent education at the NISD. It is, however, necessary to assess the overall situation, including the gap between the cities and the rural areas. I observed that many of the local and indigenous social workers I encountered in the field did not have opportunities to access social work education and training. Under such circumstances, the informal or alternative education and training systems that I observed were of several types.

First, opportunities for formal training of government officers, such as SSOs, were offered by central or local government authorities, including the NISD. Local government officers were called upon to participate in intensive training for several days within the assigned province, or in Colombo and its suburbs as of 2017. Besides, the social work diploma programme for specific officers (Samrudhi officers), who were expected to work for poverty reduction and socio-economic empowerment of disadvantaged people was recently conducted by the NISD for the first time (NISD,

2020b). [3] Regarding CBR, which is an international scheme and approach, I observed the training opportunities by which SSOs and related officers learnt to perform their community practice. I also observed that guidelines and related manuals on CBR (WHO et al., 2010), which were translated versions in local languages, had been distributed to these SSOs and CBR volunteers. Therefore, expanding such training opportunities seemed to be in the process of development.

Second, local government officers and NGO staff had access to some training opportunities in more practical settings at the field level. The local government officers, for instance, learnt about practical methods through meetings and conferences and discussed implementation methods and support skills with CBR volunteers. In addition, newly appointed SSOs and related officers received on-the-job training. In a CBR model division, a senior SSO presented her skills and views of developmental activities (e.g. promoting self-help groups, mobile workshops, village committees and community mobilisation) and explained her intentions and techniques to the newly appointed officers (Higashida, 2018). However, as of 2018, it appeared that systematic education was not being provided in these fields.

Third, mutual learning opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and skills related to social work were created for local government officers and NGO staff. As an international development worker, I was involved in these activities. Their objective was to provide capacity development opportunities in the Sri Lankan context with an awareness of international norms and frameworks. The activities included advice

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[3] Besides, 29 field officers participated in a programme of diploma on social work, offered by the NISD, in 2017/2018 (Ministry of Social Empowerment, Welfare and Kandyan Heritage, 2017).

through consultations, such as care conferences, and capacity development through collaborative planning and implementation of activities, such as model workshops, seminars and training. This was an interactive form of learning rather than a top-down approach administered by international developmental social workers for local and indigenous social workers. In fact, as an international developmental social worker, I had little involvement in direct support, but I was required to provide advice and capacity development. It was a bi-directional process of exploring social work skills that also enabled the international developmental social workers to learn more about the socio-cultural context.

As an example, I worked in league with SSOs in the division to organise multiple training sessions on mental health social work[4] in 2015. Before the sessions, we noted that people with psychiatric disorders, including schizophrenia and drug addiction, were likely to have limited opportunities to interact with others except for their family members and medical staff in rural areas. We identified the potential factors contributing to this situation, such as the separation of medical institutions and social services, the lack of specialised healthcare institutions and human resources and the social stigma dictating that those who have such disorders should be hidden. Based on the situation analysis in the field, we held a series of workshops on mental health social work for SSOs and related frontline officers in the prefecture. The sessions consisted of lectures by experts on mental health, followed by mock case conferences. During the sessions, participants were required to identify the mental health issues facing them, including clients who seemed to have difficulties but no community support. The

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[4] This paper does not describe educational situations related to psychiatric or psychosocial work in Sri Lanka (Galappatti, 2005).

participants mentioned not only the situations of people in need but also common religious and cultural views of them, such as simply karma being a cause of psychiatric disabilities. We then discussed how to support their community life and how to cooperate with healthcare and medical institutions. One participant commented after the sessions that they 'had met people with mental disorders, but did not know how to support them. [They would] like to support those whom [they had] met in the community'.

Cases in Mongolia

In Mongolia, the circumstances of social workers have changed dramatically in recent years. Before 1990, under the political and economic influence of the former Soviet Union, the Mongolian Pioneers Organization, for example, was often considered a social service stakeholder, who provided ideological education and guidance based on socialist thought (Namdaldagva, 2016; Namdaldagva et al., 2010). Since the country's democratisation in the early 1990s, poverty and socio-economic issues had become extreme, as exemplified by the so-called 'manhole children'. In the field of social work with children and families, UNICEF, Western NGOs (e.g. Save the Children) and developmental assistance have provided various kinds of support. The education and practice of social workers have improved, especially in regard to issues pertaining to children and families (Namdaldagva, 2016; Namdaldagva et al., 2010).

Since the first formal social work education programme commenced at Mongolian State Pedagogical University in 1997, social work education has undergone a process of development with the involvement of academics from abroad and international organisations (Terbish & Rawsthorne, 2020). As of 2020, there are more than 14 higher education institutions that provide education on social work or social welfare, including the National University of Mongolia, the Mongolian National

University of Education and the Mongolian University of Science and Technology. In addition, some social workers' associations, such as the Mongolian Association of School Social Workers, have played a role in connecting field work and education, albeit with limited functionality (Namdaldagva, 2016; Namdaldagva et al., 2010). School social work appears to be well developed, as the placement of social workers in schools is officially mandatory. However, social workers have not responded fully to the issues facing the 'Ger' district—where living conditions tend to be disadvantaged—or to otherwise marginalised people (Terbish & Rawsthorne, 2016, 2020). As there remains a gap between social work education and the supply of professional personnel, not only increased quality but also a systematic development of social work education is required (Namdaldagva, 2016; Namdaldagva et al., 2010).

In terms of formal social work education in rural areas, for instance, Dornod University, which is a national university, plays a leading role in social work education for the three eastern provinces (Dornod, Khentii and Sukhbaatar). According to JICA field reports in 2019, the Department of Social Work Education, a subset of the education faculty, was established in 2000. About 40 students were registered in the course in 2019. According to an international social worker who was dispatched by JICA to the university, some graduates, for example, were employed as social workers in schools and local government offices. Many other students, however, were not able to find jobs as social workers. She also described barriers to education, such as the fact that academics tend to lack practical experience, together with a low level of public understanding of social work.

Although formal social work education on disability-inclusive development remains in the development phase, some efforts have been made in the country. Recent developments have been made in the social protection and social welfare system, with

laws on children and poverty established in the 1990s (Namdaldagva, 2016). The Law on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established in 2016 in line with the CRPD. According to a comprehensive historical analysis of social work, disability-inclusive development is still marginalised, and the curriculum at Mongolia's higher educational institutions appears to be quite limited. However, some related credits have been offered in recent years (Namdaldagva, 2016).

Additionally, training opportunities for human resources in social work in the field of disability have been planned and provided. Between February 2017 and March 2020, sessions of disability equality training (DET) based on the social model of disability were held at various organisations and sectors, including educational institutions, in cooperation with the DPUB under the initiative of the MLSP (Higashida et al., 2020). As of May 2020, the Asian Development Bank had also planned to establish a course to build the capacity of human resources on disability issues (MLSP & JICA, 2020).

Local and indigenous social workers

At the central level of the government sector, officials and experts of the MLSP are involved in policymaking and perform functions, and some of their engagement can be considered macro-level social work. In addition, a plan to upgrade the National Rehabilitation Centre as an agency specialising in disability and rehabilitation under the umbrella of the MLSP was officially approved in June 2018, and the General Agency for Development of Persons with Disabilities was established in August 2018. Three of these 29 staff members held degrees related to social work or social welfare (Field notes, April 2020). At the frontline and grassroots levels, social workers were also active mainly in the local administrative sector (Terbish & Rawsthorne, 2020). Although their major efforts were related to administrative tasks and welfare programmes, they were

also responsible for disability and development and were required to have skills and values related to social work.

However, many social workers appeared to obtain the opportunity to learn skills and perspectives related to social work solely after starting work in the field. Some social work degree holders had been involved in administrative work in a school or local government office (such as at secondary subdivisions 'Soum' and sub-districts in Ulaanbaatar 'Khoroo'), but many graduates worked not as a social worker in other sectors (Namdaldagva, 2016). This mismatch was likely to have a relationship with the low social status and low pay of social workers in Mongolia (Terbish & Rawsthorne, 2020). In contrast, even those who had a job title and psychosocial identity as a social worker might not have received formal education in social work at a higher educational institution and may have needed to be trained in social work after starting work (Namdaldagva et al., 2010). In other words, the reality was that many social workers gained experience and skills in social work in the field (Namdaldagva, 2016).

In addition, unit leaders at Khoroo (administrative subdivisions in the capital), most of whom might not have received a professional social work education, were close to the residents and had the potential to fulfil a portion of the functions of social workers through their access to the social support network. According to field studies by Terbish and Rawsthorne (2020), they may be considered 'quasi-developmental social workers' in the Ger district, into which many people migrated after democratisation in the 1990s. Terbish and Rawsthorne point out the potential and challenges of their substantial community-based activities, whilst stressing the need to strengthen the government's involvement. Terbish and Rawsthorne also suggest the exploration of their culturally relevant and developmental practices in the changing context from primarily nomadic traditions to one of urbanisation and modernisation.

In NGOs, some of those who worked at the grassroots level with 'social worker' as their job title held bachelor's degrees in social work and related studies (Namdaldagva, 2016). During my field practice, however, I found that such NGO workers were quite rare in the disability field. In Mongolia, there were hundreds of NGOs working in the field of disability issues, including DPOs, most of which were small. For instance, I observed some social workers visiting households where disabled people lived in disadvantaged areas, such as the Ger district in Ulaanbaatar. Other NGO members, including disabled people and volunteers, carried out activities promoting the social participation of disabled children. Although some of them reported that they had learnt social work skills in a formal setting (all data were self-reported and could not be confirmed), it seemed that many NGO members, including local and indigenous social workers, had learnt their skills and developed their techniques in the field practice, with short-term training interventions and seminars.

Capacity development cases

The DPUB, conducted by the MLSP and JICA, assessed the needs and issues with local stakeholders through preliminary surveys, field activities and dialogues. Based on the identified local needs and contexts, we jointly explored the ideal methods of capacity development in Mongolia by creating opportunities to consider international trends and good-practice cases in Asia. Initially, the DPUB's external experts assumed that direct support activities for DPOs and related NGOs (e.g. peer counselling, employment support, information provision, assistance services and advocacy) would be required. However, the DPUB revealed that the opportunities for capacity development of central-government authorities and NGOs in Ulaanbaatar were quite limited. Therefore, the DPUB conducted various capacity development activities through seminars, study sessions and training for fostering core members of these organisations.

The DPUB, for example, organised a disability study session for local stakeholders such as administrative officers and NGO staff, including disabled people, from April 2018 to March 2020. Whilst holding these sessions, we also streamed live video or concurrent webinars, making the lectures available to those who had difficulty attending in person, including problems encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 40 to 50 participants joined in each session to strengthen their knowledge and skills. A certificate of completion was given to 40 participants who met the requirement of participating at least five out of six times in each series. In addition to the disability study sessions ('basic courses'), the DPUB planned an 'advanced course' targeting those who completed these general courses to develop their knowledge and skills. The advanced course, consisting of 10 sessions, was held once a month. Eighteen people from NGOs and the government sector applied to be registered. The completion requirement was that each attendee must participate in more than eight sessions and give an oral presentation on disability issues or related themes. In November 2019, certificates were awarded to 14 participants.

In response to the establishment of the General Agency for Development of Persons with Disabilities in 2018, a full-day seminar was also held to implement the DET, to deliver lectures on international trends in disability and development issues, and to discuss the necessary practices in Mongolia. Following this seminar, activities focussing on specific themes, such as improving accessibility, disability-related information and regulations, were organised to develop capacities at the personnel level. The DPUB's experts were required to continually provide advice and cooperation regarding the human resource development of the General Agency by holding workshops and practices.

In the context of 'South–South cooperation', mutual learning is often explored between developing and emerging countries. Capacity development workshops, for instance, were held in Thailand from 13 to 21 February, 2019 under the coordination of the Asia-Pacific Development Centre on Disability (APCD). Ten trainees from Mongolia's administrative agencies and NGOs in the field of disability participated in the workshops that were co-organised by the JICA/DPUB. The purpose was to learn and discuss how the government of Mongolia and NGOs in disability issues could collaborate towards fulfilling the CRPD by learning from the advanced experience of Thailand. Thailand has an admirable history not only of cooperation between the government sector and NGOs but also of establishing a cooperation system between NGOs, including DPOs. After the workshops, a seminar with the theme of 'Collaboration Meeting between the Government and Non-government Sectors' was held in Ulaanbaatar by the ex-trainees. They reported what they had learnt in the workshops to the attendants. In particular, they concluded that networking and collaborative practice between stakeholders, including strengthening the relationships amongst NGOs, would be required for disability-inclusive development. Moreover, the strengthened network between stakeholders in Mongolia and Thailand appeared to promote the organisational capacity of the committee of the 4th Asia-Pacific Community-Based Inclusive Development Congress 2019 held in Ulaanbaatar (APCD, 2020). The Mongolian national organising committee, in which some of the ex-trainees participated, had substantial dialogue with APCD, which took the initiative at the international organising committee. This developmental process can be considered an example of knowledge interaction between domestic stakeholders and international development actors in disability issues, although not only those related to social work but also various affiliations were involved.

Discussion

This present exploratory study examined practical education and training for local and indigenous social workers in Sri Lanka and Mongolia, coupled with the perspective of international developmental social work. This section discusses the practical and educational issues revealed in field data and ethnographic descriptions obtained through developmental social work practices, complemented by literature and other sources, in Sri Lanka and Mongolia.

In both countries, whilst formal and specialised social work education has been developed, especially at post-secondary or tertiary institutions, the actual situation is that many workers who have not received social work education nevertheless appeared to engage with disability issues in the government and non-government sectors. Although some of those workers who had not obtained diplomas or degrees related to social work have received short-term recurrent education and training in social work, the present findings indicate that practical skills and knowledge are mainly acquired and practised in the field.

The findings have shown that some education and training opportunities, both formal and informal, were available to local and indigenous social workers. Although these were not necessarily offered under the rubric of social work education in the present cases, capacity was developed by creating opportunities for training at both the central and field levels. In terms of training and capacity development outside the framework of higher education for social workers, the involvement of faculty members of local and overseas universities seemed to be limited in the author's observation at the field level, particularly in rural areas. Rather, training opportunities were created at the organisational level by inviting domestic and international experts to address officers of the government sector and staff of the non-government sector.

Implications for education and training from the perspective of international developmental social work

The findings of this study have implications for the education and training, as well as the capacity development, of local and indigenous social workers from the international development perspective. It is possible to interpret some findings of developing social work education and training from the viewpoint of the interaction, or reciprocal exchanges, between indigenous and local knowledge and international social work (Midgley, 2009). In other words, the optimal outcome would be the co-production of knowledge and practice through interaction-based synergy with the initiative of local stakeholders, as discussed below (Nonaka & Toyama, 2015). These findings can yield suggestions for future social work education and training, including higher education in the countries and international social work education.

From the perspective of exchanging knowledge with the paradigm of international developmental social work, the author's following self-interpreted and abstracted experiences may be discussed critically. International developmental social workers collected related information in a community or organisation by engaging in dialogue and collaboration with local stakeholders, participating in events and activities conducted by local workers and working together, in Sri Lanka and Mongolia. During such activities, the international social workers attempted to deepen mutual understanding with local stakeholders by probing for meanings and implications of indigenous knowledge and practices. The externalisation and expression of tacit knowledge by local people (Nonaka & Toyama, 2015) could be facilitated and promoted as one of the roles of those who entered from outside the community or organisation (Wada & Nakata, 2015); in this context, international developmental social workers. Depending on the local needs and circumstances, international social workers

sometimes attempted to introduce or propose knowledge and technology from the outside to create new policies, practices and knowledge in line with the local context. However, hosts' acceptance and utilisation or rejection of such external knowledge, information and technology might depend on many factors. These included the relationship between international and domestic stakeholders, how well the new knowledge corresponded with local needs and the availability of appropriate technology and their facilitation skills. In particular, if international social workers had lacked understanding of the local tacit knowledge, collaborative expression and dialogue, this could have easily led to the imposition of knowledge from developed countries—traditionally Western-rooted theories and norms—and a resulting paternalistic or colonialist relationship (Midgley, 1981, 2009, 2017).

This perspective based on the knowledge-creation process (Nonaka & Toyama, 2015; Wada & Nakata, 2015) and reciprocal exchanges (Midgley, 2009) also has implications for future social work education and training.[5] First, this perspective is useful for developing practical modules and field work for the education and training of local and indigenous social workers. In addition to learning based on existing knowledge, this discovery-based and active learning method is appropriate to identify social and personal issues and identify solutions in the context of a practical field. This approach could promote a systematic understanding of social issues and reality, awareness of contexts in each field, and their reflective practice. In this study, I have focussed on the involvement of international actors, but higher education institutions

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[5] It would be possible to discuss the policy and institutional change at the macro level. For instance, researchers could examine the relationship between domestic and international norms and their dynamics (Fadgen, 2019).

within each county should ideally be key actors as well. It is assumed that their active commitment to field training and capacity development could contribute to filling the gap between education and the supply of human resources. Second, a knowledge-creation-process perspective also has implications for the development of professional social workers. Although discovery-based education requires further examination, it is considered useful in the field and related modules. In particular, practices utilising indigenous and local knowledge and technology may be developed through education and research, including the interaction between domestic and international stakeholders, as a return to the field.

Limitations

This case study has several limitations. First, I analysed field data focussing on actual situations in Sri Lanka and Mongolia, and the contents and scope of this analysis were accordingly limited. Although I attempted to examine phenomena that have not been sufficiently discussed in previous literature, this study does not insist that the author's observations represent comprehensive features of either country. For instance, this article did not examine the indigenous social workers with, for and by 'indigenous peoples' (Gray et al., 2010) specifically, such as Vedda in Sri Lanka. In addition, the analysis is limited to the education and training of local and indigenous social workers in disability related fields. Second, the analysis in the case studies relied on the author's subjective experience in the position of an international developmental social worker. Regarding knowledge exchange and co-production, local stakeholders are likely to have different viewpoints and experiences that might not be revealed here (Pulla et al., 2020). Also, during data collection, local people may not have revealed undesirable situations to the author who is an outsider. It cannot exclude the possibility that the cases described in this study may be biased because of these factors. Therefore, more rigorous

and comprehensive evidence is required.

Conclusions

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the findings of this study can contribute to the development of education and practice of local and indigenous social workers in Sri Lanka and Mongolia, which have not been well documented in the academic literature. This study suggests that researchers and practitioners deepen their discussions on education and training for local and indigenous social workers considering the association with the educational system for professional and certified social workers. Although future work in this area is likely to prioritise the development of education and training for professional social workers, we also need further discussion of the educational opportunities targeting local and indigenous social workers. A system that creates an undesirable hierarchy of professional social workers and indigenous social workers would be subject to criticism, but expanding educational opportunities for local and indigenous social workers could lead to the development of comprehensive education for socio-culturally relevant social work.

This study also suggests that future studies can utilise the findings to advance the development of social work education and international cooperation. In particular, it is necessary to examine the collaborative practice and education by domestic and international social workers, including the more detailed discussion on the knowledge-creation process in other contexts.

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